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Senate Panel Endorses McMahon as C.I.A. Deputy

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WASHINGTON, May 27 — The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence voted unanimously today to approve John N. McMahon as Deputy Director of Central Intelligence.

Before the vote, Mr. McMahon, who is the executive director of the Central Intelligence Agency, told the senators that the agency would not abridge the constitutional rights of Americans or distort intelligence information to justify the policies of political leaders.

Mr. McMahon, whose nomination is expected to be approved by the Senate early next month, told the committee that United States intelligence agencies in the 1980's must widen their focus beyond the Soviet Union and other traditional adversaries to examine the political, economic, social and religious forces that influence world events.

To Replace Admiral Inman

Last month, Mr. McMahon, who has worked in a variety of high-level jobs in a 31-year career at the agency, was selected by President Reagan to replace Adm. Bobby R. Inman as the nation's No. 2 intelligence official.

Admiral Inman, who took positions on intelligence and foreign affairs that brought him into conflict with Reagan Administration policy, submitted his resignation to Mr. Reagan last month but has said he would serve until a successor was confirmed by the Senate.

The committee questioned Mr. McMahon in private on Wednesday. He returned today for public testimony.

Mr. McMahon, in a statement, said, "The activities of the intelligence community involving Americans are, and must continue to be, limited, subject to strict standards of accountability, and far removed from any abridgement of

cherished constitutional rights."

Pressed by Senator Walter D. Huddleston, Democrat of Kentucky, on whether the agency would use such intrusive investigative techniques as wiretaps and mail openings against Americans in gathering intelligence information, Mr. McMahon said, "I don't think the C.I.A. will ever be involved in using intrusive techniques against Americans in this country."

Agency Powers Broadened

An executive order on intelligence signed by Mr. Reagan last year gave the agency, for the first time, authority to conduct certain operations inside the United States.

Mr. McMahon told the committee that the agency and Federal Bureau of Investigation had drafted procedures for putting the executive order into effect. He said that Attorney General William French Smith was reviewing the proposed guidelines.

Asked by Senator Huddleston about a danger that intelligence officials might feel compelled to distort their reports to support an Administration's policy decisions, Mr. McMahon said he would resign if he felt the independence of intelligence work was being undermined by political leaders.

In his statement, Mr. McMahon said, "As we move through the 1980's and beyond, it is clear that the intelligence mission must be geared to threats which are increasingly varied, subtle and complex." Such threats, he said, included economic, social and political forces that have not been a focus of

American intelligence collection.

On other matters, he said he supported Congressional overseeing of intelligence activities and approved proposed legislation that would grant the agency relief from provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

Mr. McMahon did not respond when Senator Joseph R. Biden Jr., Democrat of Delaware, said some senators had "lingering doubts" about the candor of William J. Casey, the Director of Central Intelligence. But he vowed to be candid in his presentations.

Last year several committee members, including the chairman, Barry Goldwater, Republican of Arizona, called for Mr. Casey's resignation when questions were raised about the completeness of his financial disclosures.

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